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LETTER

From no far

COUNTREY,

BEING

A Judgement upon the preſent poſture of Affairs in

ENGLAND, &c.

[Appendix - Hist. & Pol. - II.]

WRITTEN TO,

And made publike at the requeſt of a Worthy Perſon elected to ſerve in the approching PARLIAMENT.

As worth the ſerious conſideration of his Fellow Members.

Printed in the Year, 1660.

BRITISH MUSEUM
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A LETTER From no far COUNTREY,

SIR,

I thank you for your news and the newſ-books you ſent me, which neither of them by any art of mine are to be reconciled with themſelves, for you tell me while a Commonwealth ſeemeth to be declared for, Common-wealthſ-men are as it were kickt out of all imployment, civil or military. Much hath been ſaid heretofore of a threefold cord, but I like not your Stateſmen, that work like Ropers, nor ſee, how a ſlippery trick ſhould be the cauſe of a ſteddy Government. But however your Commonwealthſ-men may do, by your news, their principles by your books, I mean the Votes, and Acts of Parliament, will ſhift well enough for themſelves. It is true that the whip and the bell, the ſcourges of the *Rump*, with the ſound of a laſh, ſo fatal unto themſelves, have influenced this Nation in ſuch manner, that the genius, as ſome, or the ſpirit, as others call it, of the ſame people, who in time of the Court would rather have choſen a Tapſter then a Courtier, now under the name of a Commonwealth, but in the dregs of confuſion, would rather elect a ballad-ſinger then a Commonwealth-man; Nevertheleſs, while the next Parliament is ſummoned, as it were in the name of the people, and without regal authority, while the full power and free choiſe of the Government to ſucceed is wholly devolved upon the Deputies of the people, the preſent Acts and Votes run in ſtile, and every way elſe unto a Common-wealth, may pitch and ſettle, (to

the best of my understanding) upon no other principles or foundations, then such, whence no other superstructures or frame of Government, (without violence) can arise but that of an equal Common-wealth or perfect democracy; for what clearer testimony of this can be afforded by Art or nature then is expressed in the present act for the Militia? By this Act you have the Earl of *Northumberland*, where he weighes most, joyned with *John Hudson* Esq. and some thirty more of the Commons of that County, the like respectively for some forty more Earls, Viscounts and Barons, holding far less proportion unto the Commons with whom they are indifferently joyned, without any advantage in Vote or otherwise. Nor, should a man add the whole Peerage of this Nation to the whole Comminalty, were it to be doubted but they would hold yet less: Sir, all the rest is but superstructure, how it is at the root (though perhaps unseen) is unavoydably felt. The sword is in the people, and not (without moving propriety) to be wrenched out of their hands. Whereas the people were anciently arraied by the Nobility, the Nobility (you see) are now arraied by the people; whereas a King could not anciently be brought in but by the Lords, now the King (you will confess) cannot be brought in but by the Commons. Let them come with you to the next Parliament that may, let them go whether they can; if Government be not to be preserved by any other means then the same by which it was acquired, the King can no more be sustained, as heretofore by the Lords, but must hereafter (whatever in alteration of the forme it may cost) be sustained by the Commons.

Sir I beseech you, was this our old Government? or if (through time as well the innovator as devourer of things) it be of it self become a new one, must it be still (as in the reignes of learned predecessors) an *Utopia* or *Chymera*? There is much daring of Larks, but Sir I am upon good grounds, I go (you see) upon an act of Parliament let them answer to this. Are foundations in *England* altered or not altered? for such as the Government is in the root or foundation, such of necessity must it be in the branch or superstructure. If the sword in the hand of the Lords made an Aristocracy, then the sword in the hands of the Commons must make

make a Democracy, or there will be more windfals, for where foundations come to be altered or ſtand one way, and ſuperſtructures are left hanging another way, it can tend to nothing but ruine. Hence that which hath fallen, hence that (if not prevented) which is falling upon this Nation. And what prevention, what remedy? If the Militia be not in the Commons, what means this Act? if the Militia be in the Commons what power have the Lords? if the Lords have no power where is the old Government? if the old Government be gone, what remains but confuſion or to introduce a new one?

To remove unto a new houſe, though from a worſe unto a better, is one of the moſt troubleſome, one of the impatient affaires, a buſineſs in which, how neceſſary ſoever, the family to be well ordered muſt be as it were totally diſordered. The caſe of a people neceſſitated unto change of government is of like nature. And as the genius or humor of a family may be one thing in it ſelf, and upon this occaſion ſeem another, ſo the humor or genius of a people, be it that they were never ſo weary or impatient of the incurable inconveniencies of their laſt houſe or Government, yet upon queſtion of removal unto a new one, they conceive a kind of abhorrency, they bemoan themſelves as it were of exile from their native ſoil. Thus it ever was, thus it will ever be in like revolutions, wherein to ſet much by the Genious of a people, is to comply with them unto their own deſtruction. Leave them in a form under which they know whom to quarrel with, or what to quarrel for, and this ſickly genious, this quarrelſome humor of theirs is incurable, but bring them under a form in which they can never finde whom to quarrel with, nor what to quarrel for, (which or none is the proper work) and this ſickly genius, this quarrelſome humor of theirs is perfectly cured. There is no looking back for a people advanced by ſo apparent ſteps, by ſo many years travail upon ſuch a journey as the people of *England* now are; to think by a calme of popular impatience to be at home again, is as if a man near the *Indies*, ſhould think to be in *England* again by a turn upon the toe. The foundation of the old government is ſunk, it is fallen it is fallen, when an houſe is fallen it is not grief, not rage,

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not any obſtinacy in the owner can make him live there as he did, it muſt bee new built.

Nor is newneſs of Government alone (in which caſe our felicity were certain) ſufficient to make it ſecure or laſting, without ſuch prudence in formation of the ſame, as may exactly ſhape and fit it unto the ſubject matter. To riſe otherwiſe (as hath been abundantly ſeen and felt) unto the greateſt heighth, is but to fall loweſt. With ſuch as are in power and under a neceſſity to introduce a new form, there is no mean between the greateſt ſecurity and the greateſt danger, the higheſt glory, and the baſeſt infamy.

This by politicians hath been pronounced univerſally, but now in *England* is more holding then elſewhere it hath ever been, for whereas other governments which have ſuffered like changes, for example that of *Rome* antiently, and that of later times in *Holland*, were ſuch from the very beginning, as to become more perfect Common-wealths, needed but to remove or change their topſtones, as a King into Conſuls, or a Prince for a Stateholder, in which caſe an oath of abjuration was ſufficient: the ancient Government of *England* being ruined in the very foundation, that is in the Ariſtocracy, requires a renovation or reordering of the whole ſuperſtructures, in which an oath of abjuration can come but to little, for that whether the King be reſtored or not reſtored it is equally neceſſary the building be ſuch as may ſtand; and that the building of a Government now in *England* be ſuch as may ſtand, engageth unto the greateſt prudence in hitting, or the vaſteſt danger in miſſing. The greateſt prudence in hitting, becauſe not a topſtone, or ſome part is to be altered, but the whole frame to be renewed: the vaſteſt danger in miſſing becauſe to work otherwiſe is to work againſt the only foundation which is now the whole people, and for the intereſt of ſome party.

The parties now in England are three, the Royaliſt, the Preſbiterian, and the Sectary. Nor appears it by what the Sectary hath done, the Preſbiterian is doing, or the Royaliſt prepares to do, that there is any thought amongſt them of union or of a Government, but of tyrannizing one over another. If the King therefore be reſtored by ſome one of theſe, it amounts, (if unto any Government at all) unto one, as now as any, and can tend neither

ther unto the ſafety of the King, nor of the people, but muſt introduce, a Royal, a Presbiterian, or a Sectarian Oligarchy: whereof, which ever reigns muſt keep down the other two, by unnatural force, in the head of which the King muſt be perpetually expoſed, and if any other then the King be advanced unto the head of any one of theſe parties it muſt be with the greateſt ſcandal, and tend but unto the worſe effect, the vaſter diſcontent, diſunion and danger of the people.

The *Salus Populi*, the ſafety of the people, if ever they attain to it, muſt conſiſt in ſuch a forme of Government, as may apparently and effectually take in and hold them and all parties of them united.

To attain unto ſuch a form in *England*, (the Ariſtocracy being irreparably broken) there is no other way whatſoever but by introduction of a well ordered Democracy, to which end, the game would eaſily play it ſelf in any hand, but for the parties that are ſtill ſnatching the cards one out of anothers.

That the Ariſtocracy is broken the act cited maketh not plain confeſſion, but proof. That it is not to be repaired, as ſome meditate, by the reſumption of ſuch eſtates, as ſince the later war have been demoliſhed, is plain in that the war began by the ſword in the hand of the people, and ended accordingly; nor, as others, by the recruting of the decayed Nobility with ſome of the richeſt of the Gentry, in that all ſuch as hold above two thouſand pound a year in this Nation, are not above three hundred perſons, nor, all that which is holden by theſe three hundred perſons, above one tenth of the whole territory. The other nine parts, and ſo by conſequence the whole, being holden by the Democracy, the Government able to hold the whole people united, can be no other then an equal Common-wealth.

In Democracy or in an equal Common-wealth, a Nobility or a Gentry uſurping the leading, never hold it, and not uſurping the leading, never loſe it. The reaſon whereof, throughout ancient experience is not clearer, then at this preſent amongſt us, where no man can imagine, but the Lords in a diſtinct houſe, muſt follow the Commons, and not in a diſtinct houſe, nor otherwiſe preferred then by election of the people muſt lead them, to give

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any peculiar priviledges, under the name of well affected or the like, unto some of the Lords in the Senate, were to allow the like claim unto some of the Commons in the popular assembly, either of which, infects the Common-wealth with inequality, and a Common-wealth infected with inequality is so apt to break out into war or discord, that it never failed of this effect, where the people have not been the sole donors of all Magistracies and honours by their votes or elections. Certainly it must be confessed, that elections regularly and freely made, were as easie and efficacious, as confusedly and partially, and elections regularly and freely made, would amount unto an equal Common-wealth. But be it as it will, let the animosities now broken loose, elect into the Parliament, elect into the Militia, of the most averse unto Democracy, so much the better, it reduceth the whole controversy unto a point; for here it lies, If they can so patch up the Aristocracy, that is, the Lords house, as to make it sustain the ancient weight, the old Government is recovered, and they have confuted the Commonwealths-men; but, let them fail in this one, whatever else they hit, the old Government is irrecoverable, and they have confuted themselves, in which case apparently, there must be a new form.

For the introduction of a new form, it is not sufficient that Acts or Declarations be exclusive of the old, unless they be positive of some new one that is practicable, there being no certain way of barring any one form, though such an one as cannot stand, but by introduction of another, and such an one as can stand. If it have been said that a Common-wealth is a Government without a King or Lords, it implies two absurdities; first, that our ancient Government under a King, well ballanced by his Lords, the assertors and vindicators of ancient Liberty, was no Common-wealth, and secondly, that our later Governments consisting of some two or three hundred of the Commons sitting as long, and doing whatsoever they pleased was a Common-wealth, whereas in truth the former Government was much more a Common-wealth (though an unequal one) then the latter. From these two absurdities have arisen two like effects, one the mistaken genius of the people, which under the name of a Monarchy, driveth

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at a Common-wealth; the other the destruction of that form, which under the name of a Common-wealth, being no form of a Common-wealth, nor indeed of a Government, durst take upon it self such weight, as now in *England* is in no wise to be supported but by the best form of Government even the full and perfect form of an equal Common-wealth.

To the introducing of the full and perfect form of an equal Common-wealth in *England*, there goes no more, but, without other quallifications then such as have been antiently in use, to call a free Parliament in the form of an equal Common-wealth. For, (*Forma dat esse, dat operari*) the form gives the being and the natural or necessary operation or working to every thing.

To the calling of a free Parliament in form of an equal Common-wealth, there goeth no more of charge, or trouble, then, that the territory, (to the end the Common-wealth may find no rubs in her bowling or rotation) be first more equally divided.

The territory once equally divided, and the people in every division, electing annually, equally and freely, two assemblies, or (more particularly) into each house of Parliament one third part of the Members for three years to act there, (as they must whether they will or no) according to the nature of their form, they by this means perpetuate, not one assembly in the same men, the certain end whereof is, dividing and subdividing, till it come to nothing, but, two assemblies, changeable in the persons, and duly qualified for the whole matter of Government, as not consisting of any party, but of the wisdome and interest of the whole Nation, and cast not themselves upon trust in men, nor upon the faction incident to a single assembly, but, upon the strongest security in nature, even that whence the operation of each creature proceeds, and which the operation of no creature can exceed, I mean, of form, of such form as transformeth the genius of a people, and rightly ordered, is that onely which in a popular State can, and of necessity must hold, all parties united.

It must be confessed now unseasonably soever, that Common-wealth's men, such I mean as are principled, cannot bewith the forwardest, where it is arbitrary, to advise that in such a form as this, there should be any Prince or single person; nevertheless it

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neither hath been nor can be denyed by them, but a like form may (*regno laconico* or *veneto*) admit of a King with royal dignity, and revenue. Which kind of reign (like that of *Evander* in *Livy*, *magis authoritate quam imperio*) is that which the ancients (particularly *Aristotle*) call Heroick, and oppose to the Eastern, which they call barbarous. And indeed if you observe the prayses and pleadings that are now in mens mouths for our old Government, they run all upon this that the power of the Kings in that was no more. All which practise and pleadings are therefore the Stronger arguments against the old Government, in that such being the intention of it, the form was not sufficient to secure that intention, witness the many bloody wars made formerly by the Nobility, and of later times by the Commons, for nothing else but to hold Kings to the true intention of that form; nor is this (were there no other) less then good and sufficient reason, to change that form which never made good the true intention of the Government, for such a Government, as must at all points secure unto us for the future the true and full intention of that form. And to hold the King in fruition of his royal dignity and revenue, from invading the rights and liberties of the people.

Of the royal dignity there is nothing imbezeld; and for the revenue. Putting the case that the publike debts amount to three Millions, if the excise and custome amount annually to one, this with the *Regalia* yet remaining, might in a matter of twelve years pay off the publike debts, maintaining the Court in due splendor, and raise a royall revenue in new lands. Whereas resumption of the old, they being for the greater part in the hands of Souldiers, and in themselves but small, would be obstructive and not effectuall.

It is not insinuation but an apparent truth, that the King thus restored would have these not conveniencies, but felicities. He would have the whole honour of the Common-wealth without any of the burthen. He would bring in his party, otherwise in danger to be lost out, and by equal participation of such a Government repair them. He would have his hands fairly rid for him of the Scotch Presbytery, a Fanaticisme neither consistent with a Monarchy nor with a Common-wealth, the basest kind of bon-

dage, a Pedantisme, which they who press most to have imposed, by the rod, or by power, are least able to defend by reason. He would look down upon other Kings, as being armed with, or followed (without *Hyperbole*) by the most potent Militia in Christendome both at land and Sea. Had Queen *Elizabeth* or King *James* been founder of the like Government in *England*, how little had the Crown lost? How much had the people saved in blood and Treasure? Queen *Elizabeth* who it is known had good advise, succeseed courting of her Lords, for God bless you my good people: it is true since that, different courses with what success I leave to your judgement, have been taken. But other means of Empire than what have been shewn, were they desirable, are not now attainable in the present state of *England*, where, a King henceforth either can have no power at all, or must have such power as cannot be limited; for all the wayes whereby any King can have any power are but two, either a potent Nobility, or a standing Army. Where a King is founded upon a Nobility, they are the limits of his power, but where he is founded upon an Army his power can have no limit. Where the Nobility then are gone wholly to decay, there is no limiting the power, by which a King shall reign, seeing it is without a standing Army impossible to give him any such power whereby a King may reign.

But *England* seemeth to have a reach, I cannot say beyond, but beside all ages and all Nations. Whether she have an Army or no Army, she is still running upon an invention of her own. *A Parliament with a Council in the intervals*, whether she have no King must be the Government, this if she have a King, unless he get an Army: and this Parliament must have both the debate and the result too, that is, be a single Counsel without any check at all. and so be: a Government and no Government, but a tumult as the faction or humours, sometimes popular, sometimes Oligarchical, sometimes a *Divan*. For all the kindes of Government that have been or can be are but three. That is a Counsel with a monarch for the check, in which the Counsel debates as the Senate of *Rome* after the Common-wealth, or the Turkish *Divan*, and a Monarch resolves as the Roman Emperour, or the great Turk. Or a counsel with an Aristocracy for the check; in which the people debate

as anciently in the house of Commons and the Lords resolve, or are such without which there can be no result, as the ancient house of Peers, in which case the Peers will have a King, and this comes to the Government of King Lords and Commons. Or a councel with a Democracy to the check as the Senate of *Rome* in time of the Common-wealth, debating and the assembly of the people resolving, which the Senate or popular assembly being rightly ordered, amounts unto an equal Common-wealth. Nor are these checks such as may be arbitrary, but to be holding must each of them sufficiently preponderate in riches or territory, that is the King, in the absolute Monarchy, the Lords in the mixed Monarchy, and the people in the equal Common-wealth, must hold the perfect overballance in wealth or freehold; but if these be all the kinds of Government that are in Art or Nature, then a single assembly as I said before, can be none at all; which were it otherwise to be doubted is sufficiently acknowledged by it self; In that a single assembly debating and resolving sayleth not to fall immediately into faction, and in factions the stronger party kicking out the weaker, divides and subdivides till the whole come to nothing, as we have had sufficient experience in *England*, where such an assembly having a King, will be thinking to mend it self by pulling him down, and having no King, by setting one up. Nor can I conceive which way this in our case should be curable, but as hath been shewn already, that is, by assembling a free Parliament in the true form of an equal Common-wealth. An equal Common-wealth is the most certain root of the most prudent and righteous Laws, because in this form no law can be passed but by the wisdome of the nation, and the true test of the publike interest.

An equal Common-wealth is the mother of the most potent and best chargeable Militia, because in this form the whole body of the people is one disciplin'd Army, taking equally and methodically their turns, as there shall be occasion upon the Guard or in Arms.

An equal Common-wealth is of all other the most proper soyle for the plantation and preservation of true Religion. For whereas the causes of corruption in matter of Religion are but two, ambition

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tion in a Clergy vying for rule with the state, or ignorance. In this form all hope of propagating any by interest of their own, is intirely cut off from a Clergy, in regard that no Clergy without a co-ercive power in matters of Religion, can betake themselves unto any such designe; now civil and spiritual liberty being inseperable, or imperfect, it follows that for the maintenance of civil liberty (without which this Government is none) an equal Common-wealth must also assert and maintain the liberty of conscience, which wholly frustrates a Clergy of co-ercive power in matter of Religion, and yet defends Religion from the other corruption or that which might redound from ignorance, by a known rule and exercise of the same, or by the prudent institution of a National religion.

National Religion as to the form, is arbitrary, and therefore in different Countries, or different times, according as a people shall grow up in light, or increase in knowledge of divine truth, may be different. But in *England* through the education of the people, and as their judgement now stands, ought, in my mind, to consist of the Articles of the Church, and the Common Prayer Book, *mutatis mutandis*. For if education amount unto matter of conscience, and liberty of conscience be (as the Sectaries now feel) not to be secured unto our selves, but by giving it unto others, this is that way of worship, which the Sectaries (their liberty being safe) had as leif as any, and the people rather. Nay, whereof the people of *England* are not to be debarred, without conceiving themselves to be under a force, and resolving to revenge it as soon as they are able.

In sume of all, and for a fuller answer to your main query, whether a Common-wealth taking in all other interests may not be brought to take in that also of the King? I say whether the King be restored or not restored, the form of Government in *England* must be new and democratical, which that it be also rightly ordered is of great concernment: for there is no firme State of

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peace or security, save onely under a proper form of Government. Absence or imperfection of form produceth a State of War, or of tumult. Whence apparently to restore the King upon security of the form, is to provide for the safety of the King and the people, but to restore him upon any other conditions then security in the form, is to cast both the safety of the King and of the people upon the faith of men, nay upon the faith of men, in matters, wherein men cannot keep that faith, and so a crime against God and man, exposing a Nation unto ruine.

Sir, you are obeyed, I have given you my judgement upon the point proposed, in order unto the Feast for which you prepare. Never tell me that I observe not the manner of your invitation, or that those proceedings which I assert to be from the necessity of things, are therein excused upon the necessity of the times, it moves not me that I reckon without your Host, seeing by his means, you and your Fellow-Members go up resolved to eat Venison, where you will find nothing but Beeve.

But I am (like the Monky) at Chests with my Masters, if you make any further use of this Paper, I beseech you to lay a cushion upon my head, by tearing out the name of,

Sir,

April 6th. 1660. *Your humble Servant*

FINIS.